



News Release

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\$750,000 HEROIN SEIZURE

On May 2, 2007 a Department of Public Safety K9 officer seized 11 pounds of heroin out of the engine compartment of a vehicle he had stopped for following too closely. The officer made the stop at about 2:00 PM on Interstate 40 on the east side of Flagstaff.

The officer observed criminal activity indicators when he spoke to the driver, Carmelita Valenzuela (age 25 from Phoenix) and passenger Sophia Osuna (age 22 from Phoenix). The officer asked the driver if he could search her vehicle to which she refused. The officer then retrieved his K9 from his patrol unit and walked the dog around the 1998 Dodge Durango. The dog alerted on the right front wheel area and the officer started looking around the wheel and in the engine compartment. While the officer had the engine hood up, he noticed marks on the intake manifold bolts indicating the manifold may have just been removed. While looking into the manifold the officer could see an object, which appeared to be wrapped in duct tape, down inside the manifold. The vehicle was then taken to the Department of Public Safety Fleet Service office in Flagstaff where a mechanic removed the intake manifold. The mechanic stated he could not understand how the vehicle could run with the drugs where they were.

After the manifold was removed from the engine, three packages were found wrapped in duct tape. Each package contained heroin and the total weight was eleven pounds. Both women were booked into the Coconino County Jail. The driver, Ms. Valenzuela, told officers she had spent five years in prison for assault. The passenger, Ms. Osuna, had two of her children with her, an infant and a one - two year old. Both children were turned over to the Arizona Department of Economic Securities child protective division out of Phoenix.

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY